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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Fifty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 19 April 2001 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the President of the General Assembly and to the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to draw your attention to the dangerously rapid escalation in the past several days of military actions by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem.

In my letter dated 5 April 2001 (A/ES-10/73-S/2001/335), I expressed the Committee's concern at the violence and bloodshed on the ground. The Israeli military attacks have now been taken to a new level of intensity, particularly in the Gaza Strip. On 17 April 2001, following a massive land, air and sea operation, the Israeli army occupied the area, imposing a blockade on the Gaza City and dissecting the Gaza Strip into three separate parts. According to news reports, in the course of the operation Israeli troops have advanced at least half a mile into the Palestinian territory and have captured six Palestinian police positions along the eastern border of the Gaza Strip. In this operation, IDF used heavy machine-guns, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, helicopter gunships, artillery and sea-launched surface-to-surface missiles. The army has also closed all major roads and the Gaza International Airport. Palestinian Authority border police positions at Beit Hanoun — an area under full Palestinian control — have been occupied. Rockets have also hit buildings in Deir el-Balah and Rafah in the central and southern Gaza Strip, respectively. As a result of this military operation, four Palestinians were reported killed, including a 9-year-old and two teenagers, and some 40 wounded, including women. After having withdrawn from the Gaza Strip, IDF re-entered its southern part the next day, destroying a Palestinian police station. In the West Bank, Israeli tanks fired shells at the Bethlehem area towns of Beit Jalla, Beit Sahur, Al-Khader and two nearby Palestinian refugee camps. Heavy exchanges of gunfire have also been reported in Hebron.

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Our Committee is shocked and appalled by these developments. Once again, the IDF response to Palestinian attacks has been extremely harsh and disproportionate. We have always held the view that the Government of Israel should abide by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. Israel's continued refusal to do so will perpetuate the dispossession of the Palestinian people, bring greater instability to the region, and will undermine any attempts to normalize the situation. Also, the international community has acknowledged that the core of the problem continues to be the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem.

The Committee is extremely worried by the illegal incursion of IDF into the areas of the Gaza Strip that are under full Palestinian control. In this connection, the Committee emphasizes that the Israeli reoccupation of these parts of the Gaza Strip constitutes a clear and serious violation of the agreements signed by the parties as part of the peace process.

In the light of the above, prompt and decisive international action is needed to stop the current spate of violence and resume the peace negotiations. The international community should also recognize its moral responsibility for the Palestinian people, deprived of its inalienable rights for over half a century. The position of our Committee in that regard is that the United Nations should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards all aspects of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in a satisfactory manner, in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and norms of international law and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized.

We, in the Committee, have again urged the Secretary-General to intensify contacts with all the parties concerned in order to help bring the crisis to an end and restart the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. In view of a particularly tense and volatile situation on the ground, efforts within the United Nations to ensure protection of Palestinian civilians acquire special urgency.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibra Deguène **Ka**
Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of
the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People